MARK TWAIN
AND
FAIRHAVEN

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On the South wall of the reading room of The Millicent Library are two framed autographs—a manuscript speech and a letter addressed "To the Officers of The Millicent Library"—both from the pen of Samuel L. Clemens, or to use the name by which he is best known and loved, Mark Twain.

Mr. Henry H. Rogers probably never had a more devoted or loyal friend than Mark Twain. The story of that friendship lasting for twenty years until Mr. Rogers's death in 1909 is told in the admirable biography of Mr. Clemens by his secretary Albert Bigelow Paine. In all Mr. Rogers's plans for the beautifying and the betterment of his native town of Fairhaven, Mark Twain had a deep interest and appreciation.

On February twenty-second, eighteen hundred ninety-four, as the guest of Mr. Rogers and the people of Fairhaven, he attended the dedication of the new Town Hall and delivered the speech which is printed on the following pages. A visit to the Library on the same occasion inspired him to write the sentiments expressed in the letter to its trustees.

ADVICE.

Furnished at the Dedication of the Town Hall, Fairhaven, Feb. 22, 1894.

By a thoughtful and judicious allotment of the privileges of this occasion, each speaker has been appointed to the function best suited to his capacity, his character, and his credit in the community. Chief of all the speakers, and the most eloquent, stands the building itself. It is its easy office to declare to you the love of its builder for the town which was her birthplace and the home of her girlhood. It may be trusted to say its say well; and be understood; and be applauded from the heart; and to occupy the platform longer than anybody else, and make the only speech that will be printed right in the papers. Yes, and it is the only speaker of us all, gifted and popular as we try to let on to be, that can dare to stand up here and undertake to hold your unfatigued attention for a hundred years. Why, we couldn't do it for forty.

We all recognize the value of this building as an example and a suggestion—a suggestion to any who are moved by love of their fellowmen to make gifts to them of hospitals or town halls or libraries, to build these things while they are alive, not wait till they are dead. If you do it while you are alive, it is really done, and well done; but if you wait till you are dead there is but a barren result and a divided profit; you get credit for the *intention* and the lawyers get the money. The stomachs of the lawyers of this land are distended to utter discomfort with the elemosinary architecture that they have swallowed. In all this world there is no joy like the joy a lawyer feels when he sees a good hearted inconsiderate person erecting a free library or a town hall or a hospital in his will. He smiles the smile that only he knows how to smile, and goes into training for the anaconda act. Perhaps no one has ever known a

dead man to try to do even the least little simple thing without making a botch of it. The truth is, a dead man ought to lie still, and keep quiet and try to behave. But you can't teach him that; you can't teach him any useful thing. Everything about him is perishable but one thing, and that is his inability to accept the fact that circumstances over which he has no control have limited his activities. And first and last and all the time it is impossible to make him understand that there is nothing very large or fine or generous in spending his own money on himself and building hospitals with his children's cash. Why, some people do seem to get duller and duller the deader they get. Oh, well, perhaps it's no matter; it is the way they are made. Perhaps the mistake was in making them at all. I mean, if it was a mistake; I am no judge of that—but I wouldn't leave it to *them*.

It was a pleasant and patriotic thought to dedicate this building and confirm this grace to Fairhaven on the natal day of Washington—George Washington, first of Americans—George Washington, the Father of his Country—George Washington, the Father of Those Who Cannot Lie. The family has dwindled a good deal. But I am left yet; and when I look back over the waste of years and call up the faces of the others, and know that I shall see them no more in this life and that I must remain now solitary and forlornly conspicuous to the last. the sole remnant of that old noble stock, it makes me feel sad, sad, and oh, so lonesome.

What I owe to Washington no words of mine can tell. He was my model from my cradle up. All that I am,—morally speaking—I owe to his example. Even in my tenderest youth his spirit was ever near, to guide and succor me. The first time I ever stole a watermelon in my life—I think it was the first time—it was the thought of Washington that moved me to make restitution, restored me to

the path of rectitude, made me morally whole again. When I found out it was a green watermelon, I was sorry; not superficially, but deeply and honestly sorry. Then came the thought of Washington, and I said to myself, "What would Washington do?" That is what I said to myself. "What would George Washington do if he had stolen a watermelon? Green one. He would make restitution—that is what he would do." And that is what I did. I rose up spiritually refreshed and strong, and carried the melon back to the farmer's wagon and restored it to him; and said the merit was not mine, but Washington's. And then I felt that inspiriting something, that electric thrill, that exaltation which rewards duty done, a moral victory won, a moral heroism added to one's stock of dear and precious memories; and I told the farmer he ought to be ashamed of himself, going around working off green watermelons on people that had confidence in him; and made him give me a ripe one for it. And he *was* ashamed, and said he wouldn't ever do it again. So I forgave him. For when a person has done wrong and acknowledges it and is ashamed of it, that is enough for me. It was Washington that saved me that time; he has been my guardian angel ever since—and has had an active career. I am glad and proud to have an opportunity at last to help celebrate his memory and to do honor to his noble name.

In the distribution of the privileges of this platform I was appointed to temper the glare of the gay and thoughtless oratory of these others with the wholesome shadow of a few words of sober advice—for there is a time for such things, and it is meet that we recognize this truth and rest our spirits with intervals of seriousness and solemnity. And so my advice to you—yea, more, my supplication—is, that you live as Washington lived—live as I have lived—and build your gift-halls and hospitals while you still live and can build your heart as well as your money into your gift.

MARK TWAIN'S LETTER TO THE MILLICENT LIBRARY

Fairhaven, Feb. 22, 1894.

To the Officers of the Millicent Library:

I am glad to have seen it. It is the ideal library, I think. Books are the liberated spirits of men, and should be bestowed in a heaven of light and grace and harmonious color and sumptuous comfort, like this, instead of in the customary kind of public library, with its depressing austerities and severities of form and furniture and decoration. A public library is the most enduring of memorials, the trustiest monument for the preservation of an event or a name or an affection; for it, and it only, is respected by wars and revolutions, and survives them. Creed and opinion change with time, and their symbols perish; but Literature and its temples are sacred to all creeds, and inviolate. All other things which I have seen to-day must past away and be forgotten; but there will still be a Millicent Library when by the mutations of language the books that are in it now will speak in a lost tongue to your posterity.

Truly yours,

MARK TWAIN.

THE MILLICENT LIBRARY

was founded and given to the Town of Fairhaven by Mrs. William E. Benjamin, Mrs. Cara L. Broughton, Mrs. Mary H. Coe, and Henry H. Rogers, Jr., children of Henry Huttleston and Abbie P. Rogers, as a memorial to their sister, Millicent Gifford Rogers, who died August 31, 1890, at the age of eighteen years.

The building was finished and ready for occupancy on January 30, 1893, on which day dedicatory exercises were held. Addresses were given by the Rev. James M. Leighton, Mr. Henry H. Rogers, Mr. George H. Tripp, and the Rev. Robert Collyer.

The Library building is constructed of granite, with terra cotta decorations; the style is that of the Italian renaissance. The architect was Charles Brigham of Boston. A feature of the interior is the memorial window which fills the outer wall of the entrance hall. It is the work of a celebrated firm, Clayton & Bell, of London, England. The figure in the central compartment is that of the Muse of Poetry, and the features portray the likeness of her in whose memory the building was erected. The upper figure is that of Shakespeare. Other interesting features of the library are the Japanese Samurai sword, on view in the trustees' room, and the autograph letters of the presidents and of other famous Americans that are hung about the reading room.

The Library contains (1926) 31,293 books, and enjoys an exceptionally large circulation in proportion to the population of the town. It is open every day in the year, and is free to residents of Fairhaven and to other persons on the recommendation of the librarian or of a trustee of the library.